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The USSR first attacked Germany in 1941.

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On December 18, 1940, Hitler, by his Directive No. 21, approved the final version of the war plan in the East, according to which it was planned on May 16, 1941 to suddenly attack the Soviet Union and defeat it during a lightning campaign. At the beginning of 1941, separate changes were made to this plan regarding the tasks of the troops and the time of the attack, which, as is known, was postponed to June 22 because of the war in the Balkans. To implement the Barbarossa plan, three army groups were created to attack in three strategic directions (Leningrad, Moscow, Kyiv), the main of which was the central one. Although Germany allocated 73.5% of its ground forces for the war with the USSR, almost all the most combat-ready units - and attracted Finland, Romania and Hungary to participate in the Eastern Campaign, their total forces were inferior in number to Soviet troops in the western military districts. Given the military mobilization and economic capabilities of the parties, it should be concluded that Germany and its allies did not have forces capable of inflicting a guaranteed defeat on the Red Army. The limited resources of Germany, the extreme overestimation of the combat capability of the Wehrmacht and the underestimation of the military and economic power of the USSR led to the fact that the Barbarossa plan became a war plan without reserves, without large material reserves, a one-act campaign plan. Everything was subordinated to the idea of a strong initial strike, which, according to Berlin's calculations, was supposed to decide the outcome of the war by the beginning of autumn 1941 at the latest. From February 1941, the Wehrmacht began to concentrate and deploy near the borders of the USSR, which ended on the evening of June 21.

Concentrating such a large grouping of troops near the Soviet borders, the German command waged a massive disinformation campaign to disguise its intentions. This made it possible to achieve a surprise attack and, having lulled the vigilance of the Soviet leadership, did not give him the opportunity to take preemptive actions. Berlin was well aware of the danger to deployed troops if the Red Army went over to the offensive. As early as April 7, 1941, the Chief of the General Staff of the Wehrmacht, Colonel-General F. Halder, noted in his diary that the grouping of Russian troops "perfectly allows for a quick transition to the offensive, which would be extremely unpleasant for us." Somewhat later, the German Minister of Propaganda I. Goebbels confided similar fears to his diary, writing on June 14: "East Prussia is so saturated with troops that the Russians could inflict heavy damage on us with their preventive air raids. But they will not do this. Enough courage!" In their plans, the German command also proceeded from the fact that the Soviet leadership would not have time to correctly assess the danger of an attack. In connection with all of the above, the question arises whether the German attack on the USSR in this case was not a "preventive war", as German propaganda claimed. Since preventive war is "military action taken to preempt the actions of an enemy who is ready to attack or has already begun one, by his own offensive," it is possible only if the side carrying out them knows about the enemy's intentions. However, German documents testify that in Berlin they perceived the USSR only as an abstract potential threat, and the preparation of the "Eastern Campaign"

was completely unrelated to the feeling of "immediate danger emanating from the Red Army." The German command knew about the transfer of additional forces to the western districts of the USSR, but regarded these actions as a defensive reaction to the discovered deployment of the Wehrmacht. The grouping of the Red Army was assessed as defensive, and no serious offensive actions were expected from the Soviet Union in the summer of 1941. Therefore, supporters of the thesis of Germany's "preventive war" against the USSR fall into a foolish position, trying to prove that Hitler decided to thwart the Soviet attack, about the preparation of which he actually knew nothing.

Unfortunately, Soviet intelligence was unable to provide the Kremlin with evidence that Germany would attack the USSR in the summer of 1941. The Soviet leadership was aware of the presence of a rather large Wehrmacht grouping near the western borders of the USSR, but was not afraid of an imminent German attack, believing that Germany, connected with the war with England, would continue its offensive in the Middle East or try to land on the British islands, and not start a war on two fronts. Since neither Germany nor the USSR counted on an enemy attack in the summer of 1941, this means that the thesis of "preventive" actions is not applicable to either of them. In this case, the version of a "preventive war" has nothing to do with historical science at all, but is purely Hitler's propaganda thesis to justify German aggression. As a result of the fact that in their calculations the parties proceeded from different dates for the start of the war, the German command, due to a random combination of circumstances, managed to preempt the Soviet troops in completing the deployment and thereby create favorable conditions for seizing the strategic initiative at the beginning of the war. As a result, the Red Army, which was completing its concentration and deployment in the theater of operations, was taken by surprise and at the time of the German attack was not ready for any immediate action - neither defensive, nor even more offensive, which had the most negative impact on the course of hostilities in 1941.

However, the picture will be incomplete if we do not try, at least hypothetically, to imagine how events could have developed if the Soviet leadership had carried out its original plan and on June 12, 1941, had struck at Germany. At this time, German troops were completing preparations for Operation Barbarossa and concentrating near the Soviet borders, where 81.6% of the divisions that were planned to be deployed by the evening of June 21 had already been deployed in the strip from the Baltic to the Black Seas. On June 10, divisions of the first echelon began to secretly withdraw into the 30-km border zone. The rest of the troops were either on the move to the East, or were waiting for their turn to be transferred to the camps. The Luftwaffe was also completing its redeployment after the Balkan campaign. The Wehrmacht had neither a defensive nor an offensive grouping, and a Soviet attack at that moment would put it in a very difficult position and allow it to smash its forces piece by piece.

In accordance with the Soviet operational plan, the main events were to unfold on the front from Ostrolenka to the Carpathians, where the troops of the Southwestern and left wing of the Western Fronts dealt the main blow to the enemy troops. The balance of forces of the parties on the Ostrolenka-Karpaty front is indicated in Table 59, the data of which indicate that the Soviet troops had forces capable of ensuring the fulfillment of the tasks assigned to them. The troops of the North-Western and right wing of the Western Fronts were to tie up the German troops deployed in East Prussia and occupy the Suwalki ledge and the Memel region in private offensive operations. The troops of the Northern Front were preparing for an offensive in Finland, and those of the Southern Front in Romania. However, the primary measures were the actions of the Red Army on the Soviet-German border from the Baltic to the Carpathians. Table 59

Red Army # Wehrmacht # Ratio # # Divisions # 128 # 55 #
2.3 : 1 # # Personnel (million) # 3.4 # 1.4 #
2.1 : 1 # # Guns and mortars (thousand) # 38.5 # 16.3 # 2.4 :
1 # # Tanks (thousand) # 7.5 # 0.9 # 8.7 : 1 # # Aircraft (thousand) #
6.2 # 1.4 # 4.4 : 1 # # #

Hostilities would begin with a sudden strike by most of the Soviet Air Force on enemy airfields in East Prussia, Poland and Romania. The general Soviet superiority in aviation made it possible to subject the Luftwaffe airfields in the 250-km border zone to many hours of continuous air assault, which would lead to a significant weakening of the enemy air force and would facilitate the operations of the Red Army ground forces. The range of the Soviet Air Force made it possible to provide reliable fighter cover for bombing operations in a 350-km zone. If necessary, the zone of guaranteed air impact could be increased to 500 km using the latest MiG-3 aircraft. The losses of Soviet aviation could be quickly made up for by the transfer of flight formations from internal military districts, which made it possible to use more than 2.3 thousand aircraft. It was much more difficult to make up for the losses of the Luftwaffe, since they were involved in different fronts. On the territory of Germany, the air defense forces had only 282 aircraft. The German Air Force in Western Europe (861 aircraft) were connected with the repulsion of British raids, and in the Mediterranean Sea (423 aircraft) they ensured the operations of the German-Italian troops in Libya. Such a deployment of German aviation gave the Soviet Air Force a certain prospect of gaining air supremacy.

A strike against the Wehrmacht at dawn on June 12, 1941, when the German troops were completing their concentration and deployment, would have made it possible to take the enemy, who had no plans for defensive actions, by surprise in a grouping completely unsuitable for defense. A blow from the southwestern and left flanks of the Western fronts would hit 55 enemy divisions, immediately pinning down 55.6% of the troops deployed in the East, which would greatly complicate his counteractions. Using the configuration of the border, the Red Army would conduct operations to envelop and encircle enemy troops, the outcome of which would be decided by the ability of the parties to build up their forces. In the strip from Przemyśl to the Carpathians against the 2 infantry, 2 light infantry and 2 security divisions of the Wehrmacht deployed there, the Soviet command would deploy at least 28 divisions (of which 6 tank and 3 motorized), which opened the way for the Soviet troops to Sandomierz and through Tarnów - to Kraków. This breakthrough would divert additional Wehrmacht forces, which would probably have to create a new front west of the Vistula, where the main battles would unfold.

The Soviet command could use 24 divisions deployed in the rear of the Southwestern Front, as well as another 15 divisions of the High Command reserve, which could be used in southern Poland or the Balkans, to build up the strike in the South-Western direction. The German command could initially use 22 divisions to repel a surprise attack (of which 6 were security divisions, unsuitable for operations at the front), which did not have time to turn around on the Soviet border, and 26 divisions of the OKH reserve, of which almost immediately it was possible to start transferring 14 divisions to the front, which, according to the original plan of the German command, should have been sent to the front before July 4, 1941. The remaining 12 divisions (including 2 tank divisions) would have to be hastily prepared for redeployment, while it should be borne in mind that the 2nd tank division only in early June arrived on vacation in the central regions of Germany after the fighting in the Balkans and did not have time to make up for the losses incurred, and the 5th Panzer Division was in the process of redeployment from Greece to Germany. In addition, the transfer of these troops to the front would be hampered by the influence of the Soviet Air Force on the railways. In addition, the German

the command could try to transfer 5-6 infantry divisions from East Prussia, which would be difficult as a result of the actions of the troops of the North-West and the right wing of the West, the fronts and the significant impact of the Soviet Air Force.

The development of the offensive of the Red Army in southeastern Poland made it possible for the troops of the Southern Front to go on the offensive in Romania without fear of a blow from the rear. In Romania, there were only 6 divisions of the Wehrmacht, and the Romanian army was not a serious enemy, which doomed the attack of the Southern Front to success. The defeat of the northern flank of the enemy front opened the way for the Red Army to the central regions of Romania and threatened Germany's dominance in the Balkans. The German command simply had nothing to fend off this threat: 10-12 German divisions scattered across the territory of Yugoslavia and Greece could not delay the advance of the Soviet troops for a long time. A breakthrough of the Red Army would rather have created a national liberation movement in the Balkans, and above all in Yugoslavia, which would further complicate the position of the German troops stationed there. The need to plug the gap in the Balkans would force the German command to transfer there part of the troops from those 24 divisions that were in reserve, which would further weaken the front in Poland.

Total, spurred on

Of the 38 German divisions serving in Western Europe, only 14 could be used at the front, which still had to be prepared for transfer to the East. The use of the remaining 24 divisions was difficult because they were mostly stationary formations that did not have the necessary vehicles, were kept on a reduced staff and had a limited set of heavy weapons. Of course, it was possible to bring two divisions into one more full-blooded one, but this required considerable time, which also played into the hands of the Red Army. In addition, it was necessary to take into account the need to maintain a sufficient number of troops to maintain the occupation regime and repel possible British landings. Germany simply did not have the forces capable of repelling the sudden blow of the Red Army. This was recognized after the war by Field Marshal W. Keitel, Chief of Staff of the Wehrmacht High Command, who believed that the Soviet attack on Germany in 1941 could "put us in an exceptionally critical position in strategic and economic terms. [...] In the very first weeks, the attack from Russia would put Germany in extremely disadvantageous conditions. Of course, one should not consider the combat operations of the Soviet troops in the event of a surprise strike

against Germany as a "walk to Berlin." Of course, it would be a difficult, bloody struggle with a serious opponent. However, the force and inertia of a sudden strike would have allowed the Red Army, if not to defeat, then to significantly weaken the German formations on the Ostrołęka-Carpathians front. With the most favorable course of events, the troops of the Western and Southwestern fronts would be able to complete the main task and would reach the Ostrołęka - Warsaw - Łódź - Opole - Olomouc front. The least favorable result of the offensive of the Soviet troops could be the stabilization of the front along the Narew and Vistula rivers, i.e. approximately where the Soviet-German front stabilized at the end of 1944. In the Balkans, the German command had nothing

to stabilize the front at all, and the depth of the advance of the Red Army would be limited only by the inertia of the strike.

Of course, this offensive by the Red Army would not have led to an immediate decision on the outcome of the war, but a Soviet attack would have led to the disruption of the German invasion of the USSR and would have facilitated victory in the war, saving our country millions of lives and significant material values. The Red Army could have been in Berlin no later than 1942, which would have allowed Moscow to control a much larger territory in Europe than it happened in 1945. The defeat of Germany and the Sovietization of Europe allowed Moscow to use its scientific and technical potential, opened the way to "just social reconstruction" of the European colonies in Asia and Africa. Created within

The Old World socialist camp would control most of the Earth's resources. Accordingly, even if the New World had not been captured, it would most likely not have been able to significantly surpass the Old in terms of living standards. As a result, a significant number of dissatisfied people would remain there, looking with hope for help from across the ocean. In the case of the complete coverage of the Earth by the socialist system, the task formulated in the liberal European tradition of creating a single state of Mankind was realized. This, in turn, made it possible to create a fairly stable social system and would provide great opportunities for development.

Naturally, the question arises, how would Britain and the United States react to the Soviet attack on Germany? The opinion of the official Russian historiography was expressed by M.A. Gareev, who argues that in this case "the Soviet Union would appear before the whole world as an aggressor, and in the same England the forces advocating an alliance with Germany could prevail." However, this approach completely ignores both the centuries-old tradition of military-political actions in such a situation, and the real policy of England in 1939-1941. The entire military history of mankind testifies that the intervention of a third country in a war between two states has never led to an immediate unification of the belligerent countries against it. In addition, it is not clear what could have prompted England to break this pattern? If we turn to the real politics of England at the beginning of the Second World War, then it is impossible to deny the generally recognized fact that she alone could not win the war with Germany. That is why in 1939-1940, England tried in every possible way to preserve and expand its alliance with France by including other European countries in it. Since the summer of 1940, after the defeat and surrender of France, the British leadership relied on the possible involvement of the United States in the war with Germany and the deterioration of Soviet-German relations: this could lead to a war in Eastern Europe, or at least to the fact that Germany would be forced to keep there an impressive military grouping, which excluded its use against England. Known materials show that the British leadership actively sought to put both of these possibilities into practice. By the beginning of 1941, he managed to enlist the material support of the United States. In relation to the USSR, the policy of England was to force the Soviet leadership to take a less benevolent position towards Germany. To do this, information about the threat to the USSR in the event of a German victory was constantly and methodically transmitted to Moscow. In the spring of 1941, England's attempts to drag the USSR into the war began to take on the character of blackmail: if Moscow did not enter the war, then London would be

forced to make an agreement with Germany, which as a result would be able to carry out *Drang nach Osten*. When, in early June 1941, British intelligence concluded that the concentration of the Wehrmacht near the Soviet borders indicated that Germany was preparing to put pressure on the USSR to meet economic and even political demands, London, interested in Moscow's uncompromising position, decided to prepare an operation to deliver an airstrike on oil refineries in Baku. This would make it possible to put pressure on the USSR so that it would not yield to German demands. At the same time, England, through diplomatic channels, promised Moscow its assistance in the event of a war with Germany. On the other hand, information about the intentions and actions of the USSR threatening Germany was transmitted to Berlin through various channels. Therefore, it seems completely unbelievable that England, in every possible way interested in the outbreak of a Soviet-German war, would suddenly immediately rush to the aid of Germany.

Proceeding from these goals, on June 15, 1941, Churchill telegraphed US President F. Roosevelt, informing him of the possibility of a German attack on the USSR and that "if this new war breaks out, we, of course, will provide the Russians with every possible encouragement and assistance, on the principle that the enemy we need to defeat is Hitler." It should be noted here: at that moment, no one was completely sure that Germany would nevertheless attack the USSR, and could not predict exactly what turn events would take on

Soviet-German front. On June 21, Roosevelt replied that he supported Churchill's position and that the United States would provide "Russia with all possible assistance." According to Churchill's personal secretary Colville, on the afternoon of June 21, he discussed his position with the Prime Minister and asked: "Would this not be a departure from principle for him, the worst enemy of the Communists." "Not at all," answered Churchill. Churchill repeated the same position in his famous speech on the radio on the evening of 22 June. "The Nazi regime has the worst features of communism," he said. However, the main threat to England at the present time is Hitler and his regime, who "we are determined to destroy", so "any person or state that fights against Nazism will receive our help."

All this once again confirms that the main goal for the British leadership was to win the war with Germany with the help of anyone, and in principle it was completely indifferent to how exactly the Soviet-German war would begin. The same can be said about the United States, which in the first half of 1941 was increasingly drawn into an undeclared war with Germany. Naturally, Washington did not even think about any military assistance to Germany in the event of a Soviet attack. This would be completely contrary to US policy, not to mention the fact that there was influential opposition to the course of bringing the country into the war, and, as you know, the Roosevelt administration had to go to great lengths to provoke Japan to attack, which allowed the US to enter the war. World War II. Already on June 23, 1941, when no one could have known that events on the Soviet-German front would take such a difficult turn for the Red Army, the US State Department issued an official statement condemning the "principles and doctrine" of communism, but emphasizing the danger German expansion, which "at present most of all affects our own national defense and the security of the New World where we live. Therefore, in the opinion of our government, any defense against Hitlerism, any association of forces opposing Hitlerism, whatever their origin, will bring closer the overthrow of the present German leaders and thereby serve our own defense and security." On the same day, Missouri Senator G. Truman (future US President) rather frankly expressed the opinion of the ruling elite: "If we see that Germany is winning, then we should help Russia, and if Russia wins, then we should help Germany, and thus let them kill as many as possible, although I do not want Hitler to win under any circumstances." That is, the American leadership viewed the Soviet-German war as a favorable factor that reduced the danger of German expansion for the United States itself. Thus, there was a good opportunity for the Soviet Union to launch a surprise attack on Germany, pinned down by the war with England, and to obtain at least the benevolent neutrality of London and Washington (and most likely their help, albeit limited). The mood could have changed, but it would have been too late: Germany would have been on the verge of defeat, England and the USA would simply not have been able to provide real support in the war with the USSR. The United States had no ground forces at all that could be sent to Europe, and British troops were too dispersed: from the British Isles to the Far East. It took too much time to transfer to Europe a grouping of British troops sufficient for defense against the Red Army. In any case, the opposition of the Red Army, liberating Europe from fascism, would hardly have been a very popular measure in England. If we take into account the long-term goals of the

foreign policy of both the United States and England, in whose interests was the clash between Germany and the USSR and their protracted war with subsequent

the weakening of both opponents, it seems most likely that initially London and Washington would have taken a wait-and-see attitude. And then everything would be decided by the scale of the military successes of the Red Army. The political conditions for an attack on

Germany by the USSR were quite favorable. Unfortunately, Stalin, fearing an Anglo-German compromise, delayed the attack on Germany for at least a month, which, as we now know, was the only chance to thwart the German invasion. Probably, this decision "is one of the main historical miscalculations of Stalin", who missed a favorable opportunity to defeat the most powerful European power and, having reached the coast of the Atlantic Ocean, to eliminate the age-old Western threat to our country. As a result, the German leadership was able to begin on June 22, 1941, the implementation of the Barbarossa plan, which, in the conditions of the Red Army's unpreparedness for defense, led to the tragedy of 1941.